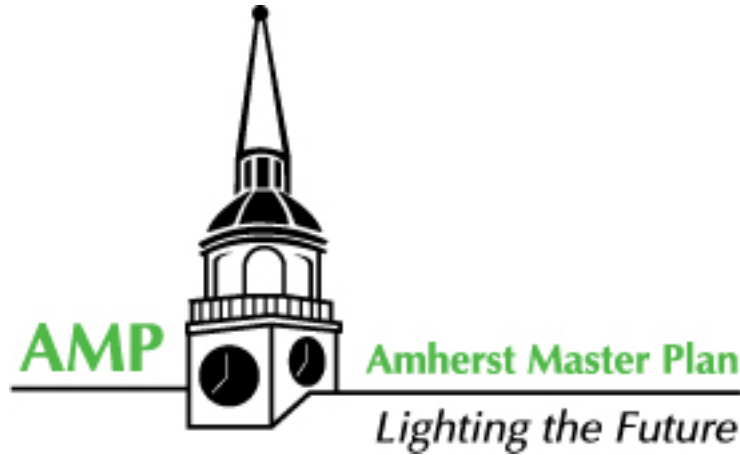


**AMP: AMHERST MASTER PLAN
LIGHTING THE FUTURE**
AMP STEERING COMMITTEE VISIONING SESSION
Wednesday, May 9, 2007



The following is a summary of the discussion held with the Amherst Master Plan Steering Committee¹ on May 9, 2007. The discussion was a facilitated visioning session with the purpose of soliciting the Committee's thoughts regarding the following questions.

1. *“What are your favorite things about Amherst (that you would want to ensure be preserved in the future)”?*

FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT AMHERST

Response	Comments	Votes²
Open space		9
Events on the common		9
Places for wildlife	Accessible	8
Sense of community		4
Safety		4
Moulton's		3
Space and pace		3
River		2
Off Main Rd.		0
Excellent schools ³		-

¹ Twelve members were present at the visioning session.

² After all participants had given their response they were asked to choose their top three.

³ This response was not voted on as it was added after voting was complete.

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2. *“What are your least favorite things about Amherst (that you feel are important to change in the future)?”*

LEAST FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT AMHERST

Response	Comments	Votes ⁴
Voter Apathy		8
Fragmentation	Lack of connection b/w various parts of town	5
Lack of recreation facilities		5
Lack of design standards	Consistency needed, code enforcement	5
Aesthetics of Rt. 101A		5
Tax structure	In relation to land use	4
Lack of public water & sewer		3
Lack of bike trails		3
Speeders		2
Lack of sidewalks		1
101A Traffic		1
Pretentious attitudes of some residents		1
Delays in 101 Improvements		0

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3. *“What words and/or images would you use to describe Amherst’s character?”*

AMHERST’S CHARACTER

- historic
- in transition
- picturesque
- small town
- lack of diversity
- quaint
- growing
- suburban
- snobby
- social connections
- cows being replaced by horses
- rural
- clean
- safe

⁴ After all participants had given their response they were asked to choose their top three.

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- *What words or images describe what used to be Amherst's character (and you would like to bring back)*

USED TO BE AMHERST AND HAS BEEN LOST

- *101A's pre-development status (no lights, no shops, slow traffic street)*
- *clean swimming water*
- *pavilion at Baboosic*
- *low (affordable) taxes*
- *dances in Town Hall*
- *social functions*
- *Agriculture and farms*
- *mass transit (train service)*
- *tolerance/civility (with respect to traffic)*
- *responsibility/shared accountability*
- *poor farm*
- *sense of community*
- *Town Meeting*
- *Small shops (would like a pub, bookstore, internet café)*
- *Country store*
- *Hotel*

- *What words or images do NOT describe Amherst's character (could exist & you wish it didn't)*

NOT AMHERST

- Glitzy
- Urban
- Friendly
- Rural/agricultural
- Not pedestrian friendly
- Not kid friendly
- Not young adult friendly
- Not senior friendly
- Not planned
- Does not provide services and activities for seniors and teens

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IDEAS FROM OTHER PLACES

4. *“Think about other towns you have visited (or even seen in a movie, heard or read about) and share some ideas that you think could be relevant to making Amherst a better place to live.”*
- Excellent park and recreation system
 - Farms – with first priority for local residents
 - Pub
 - Village centers (with commercial clusters)
 - Connected multi-use trails (non-motorized)
 - Plan for protection of air force satellite tracking station land
 - Research/education campus
 - Nantucket – connections
 - Bandstand on the Green for concerts
 - “Shelter Houses” – for gatherings
 - amphitheater
 - Art/Community Center (e.g. renovated barn in Hollis)
 - Parks
 - Teen Center
 - Skate Board Park
 - Train station with connections
 - Accessible industrial park
 - Municipal sewer system (especially for commercial and industrial)

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5. *“What are some potential obstacles to positive change as you see them?”*

OBSTACLES

- voter apathy
- state attitude towards growth
- money
- taxes (too high)
- changing demographics
- state tax structure
- NIMBY attitudes
- Home rule
- Lack of sense of community, lack of philanthropic tradition

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- Transient residents

6. *“What are some strategies for getting “there” (to where you would like Amherst to be)?”*

STRATEGIES

- political leadership and will
- outreach to region and state
- outreach to affluent to create a culture of continued philanthropy
- Town Meeting
- Regain political control of school system
- Raise money to fund things (land, park facilities and trails)
- Use locally raised money to leverage other funds
- Modify zoning to get more design control in commercial areas
- Political efforts to change tax structure
- Impact fees
- Encourage diversity
- Branding/image making/ market uniqueness – destination (for example recreation, horseback riding and agriculture)
- Develop cultural identity

“If you could do one thing to improve Amherst, what would it be?”

- overcome apathy
- bring back Town Meeting
- better building, design control and other code enforcement
- keep things the same or as they were
- develop more pride/identity (especially cultural identity)
- mandatory volunteerism
- more events on the Green
- bring back the dances
- additional bonding for open space, recreation, trails, parks, bike routes/lanes along roads – create an integrated system of connected open spaces
- Find a way to create incentives for private funding of facilities to be used by the public, possibly through negotiations over zoning provisions
- encourage appropriate commercial activities
- additional zoning controls
- pub - gathering place – for example the Bedford Village Inn
- create an excellent integrated park system
- funding for young adults and seniors to stay
- plant elms along 101A
- eliminate or neutralize negative and political content of published critiques of the town

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- rail with trail
- aesthetic design control for businesses